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*M. M. Brewer*

State of Connecticut.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

ON

STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

AND

VITAL STATISTICS,

Made to the General Assembly,

MAY SESSION, 1875.



HARTFORD:

PRESS OF THE CASE, LOCKWOOD & BRAINARD CO.

1875.

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# REPORT.

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*To the Honorable General Assembly of the State of Connecticut :*

We, the undersigned, having been appointed a committee by the Governor of this State, in accordance with a Resolution of the General Assembly, approved July 17th, 1874, "to inquire and report as to the necessity and expediency of a State Board of Health and Vital Statistics for this State, and also a re-organization of the local boards of health ; and if, in the opinion of such committee, such measures are necessary or expedient, to frame and present to the next General Assembly an appropriate act therefor ;" and "also to report \* \* what changes, if any, are necessary in the laws of this State in order to more effectually promote the public health ;" and "also to inquire and report as to the expediency of providing by law for the collection of statistics in relation to the material interests of this State ;" beg leave respectfully to submit the following report :

History and science teach that man is, in an important sense, the product of the physical forces which surround him. His anatomy and physiology, his structural peculiarities and sanitary condition, his mental and moral qualities, are largely (some say wholly) determined by these forces. For hundreds of centuries (so naturalists affirm), with steady aim, they have been playing on the plastic organism, moulding its functions and faculties, and shaping its career and destiny. Before the age of civilization they ruled supreme and unquestioned. Like the brute animals, man was nearly helpless, often the victim of his environment. But at length intellect itself became a power. Then began the struggle which will never end ; the

inward force warred aggressively against outward force. By the help of observation and experience, prompted by self-interest, and an inquisitive spirit, new ideas were acquired and knowledge gained. The inventive faculty was called into exercise, and thenceforth man's relation to the natural world was modified, and his condition meliorated. No longer the unresisting slave of circumstances, he became an independent source of energy and activity.

Fortunately, we live in an advanced period of the world; have a rich heritage, the accumulated provision of many centuries. With the aid of trained intellect, science, and the mechanic arts, man is now, within certain limits, "master of the situation." Using his opportunities, he has acquired the gift of prophecy, can forecast events, and thus prepare for coming changes. From the elements, in their fierceness so fatal to barbaric life, he finds ready shelter. Indeed, these elements, quite intractable in their untutored state, have, in many cases, been civilized, harnessed and made to toil for his benefit. Heat, light, electricity, magnetism, chemical affinity, gravitation, and mechanical force, have, in a notable degree, come under the yoke of intellect. They drive our ships and railway trains, turn water wheels, guide the traveler by sea and land, bear messages, and help in a hundred ways.

Not only is man's condition affected by the simple primary forces named, but his organism is moulded by certain combinations or natural groups of these, producing by their joint action rain, clouds, winds, tides, ocean currents, barometric and hygrometric variations, and all those conditions which collectively determine weather and climate. Persistently, from the first, these secondary agencies, like the primary, have been modifying his constitution and vitality, causing uniformity in some cases, diversity in others. Each geographical region or locality has its special group of circumstances giving existence to corresponding peculiarities of conformation, constitution, and morbid action. In fact, each country, each tract of territory differing from another may be expected to differ as widely in its sanitary and vital characteristics. In what precise way meteorological and climatic causes, or, in-

deed, morbid causes of any kind give existence or complexion to disease, is not in all cases clear. But this more intimate knowledge is not always necessary. It is often sufficient if we know *conditions*. If a certain topographical condition be removed, and a disease with peculiar symptoms disappear, a connection is inferred and useful information gained. We know not the sole sufficient cause of intermittent fever, but experience has proved that wet or swampy ground is in some way related to it, and that thorough drainage is, in a notable degree, a preventive. By similar means we learn that pneumonia and catarrhal fever are connected with the cold season; dysentery and cholera infantum, with the hot season; phthisis, with certain geological formations; bronchocele, with lands at the base of mountain ranges; and that those who make the required changes of residence are most likely to escape the sickness. Important facts of this kind are accumulating, and might, with more extended observation and an improved system of vital statistics, be greatly multiplied. With increased advantages, more creditable progress in the great work of sanitary reform would be secured.

Always, the problem is to show the connection between these natural agents, these meteorological, geological, geographical, and mere local influences, and the existing states of the human system; and when causes, technically so called, cannot be ascertained, to join each disease or morbid state to its indispensable antecedent or condition. When this has been done, a foundation is laid for preventive treatment. Human ingenuity, goaded by self-interest and aided by the appliances of modern science, may then find a way to remove, or qualify, or weaken the governing cause or condition, and thus break the chain which sustains and insures the mischief. If the attempt succeed and the desired results do not follow, a mistake is apparent, and a new search among the circumstances at the fountain head must be made.

Besides the natural forces hitherto considered, there are many influences (their name is legion) hostile to life and health which may be traced to the social state or private license. These more generally than others are within human

control. Man is their author and creator, and he who makes can unmake. They originate in ignorance, indolence, sensuality, and innate depravity, and deserve the largest share of our attention. Though the advantages of society are very great, there are many and huge evils which grow out of it. Among the injurious influences, the following may be named : contracted, ill constructed, badly located dwellings ; damp, low, imperfectly lighted and ventilated, perhaps over heated, rooms ; dirty carpets, bedding, and floors, particularly if moisture be allowed ; neglect of personal cleanliness ; poisonous gases or vapors or floating solid particles in the air ; too much or too little work, food, medicine, or clothing ; sedentary occupations ; a too uniform environment ; intemperance of every kind ; the depressing passions, etc. These in most cases are both causes and effects.

Uninterruptedly, since the birth of society, these social, moral, and personal agencies have been acting on the human organism, producing important structural changes and disturbing the vital movements. From the first, they have enfeebled the constitution, checked the developmental process, and corrupted all the issues of life. As a result, successive generations for thousands of years have suffered torture, disease, and premature death. Worse still, the blood has been contaminated and the strain injured ; so that were present reformation complete, recovery would be painfully slow and difficult. No one denies that frailties and defects, whatever their kind or source, are faithfully transmitted from parents to offspring, and it is not certain that they are ever wholly eliminated. It can scarcely be doubted that our race is now suffering from the ignorant or criminal practices of our earliest ancestors, say Adam and Eve. The old Calvinistic dogma concerning original sin and inborn depravity, and the wild havoc wrought in man's nature and proclivities, has a substantial basis in the laws of our being, though the theological inferences may not always be just. Practically, the only limit to the evils which bad or weak men and women may inflict on the species is to be found in the law which cuts off in childhood those who have received the richest inherit-



ance of these evils. A human organism, starting on its career, can carry only a certain amount of infirmity. If over-weighted, it will fall by the way, oftenest in the first year, sometimes in the second or third, or still later. There is little probability of its reaching the age of puberty and leaving successors; still less of a possible heir having heirs. In this way the perpetuity of the worst forms of hereditary disease is prevented, and the down grade movement of the race arrested. In that direction, the wheels are blocked. Wickedness, ignorance, incompetency, degradation, malformation, constitutional insufficiency, and their consequences, run out. Thus the species is preserved and this world left in the possession of the sounder and more vigorous. "The survival of the fittest" in the deadly "struggle for life,"—in other words, the preservation of the stronger, the healthier, and better, and the early destruction of the faulty and ill favored, heirs of sinning fathers and mothers,—is the great law which saves our kind from extinction. Compelling, as it does, each generation to submit to the winnowing process, it prevents humanity from sinking below its present level, insures its continued existence, and opens a way for advancement. The rigor of its execution is in every age the measure of its usefulness. Its necessity and terrible efficiency are seen in the mortality of the large cities, in which nearly one-half (sometimes more) of the deaths are of children under *five* years of age. The percentage in Chicago in 1869 was 62.82; in New York City in 1872, 49.58; in Boston in 1872, 42.2; in Philadelphia in the twelve years ending with 1872, 44.78; in Providence in the thirty-two years ending with 1871, 39.36; in New Haven in the eight years preceding the present, and including the still-born, 43.7, by average; in Connecticut in the six years preceding the last, from 31.5 to 37.7. The percentage of deaths under *one* year in Berlin, Prussia, is said to be 33.33 of the whole mortality; in Sweden and Finland, 20 per cent.; in France, from 16 to 20 per cent. In 1872, the deaths under *one* year were, in New York, 29.99; in Philadelphia, 27.25; in Boston, 26.66; in New Orleans, 26.6; in Providence (1871), still-born included, 26.19. In

New Haven, in the last eight years, counting still-births, they averaged 29.6, while in Connecticut, in the seven years previous to 1874, where two-thirds (probably) of the people live in the villages and on the farms, they averaged (counting as before) 21.8. But these figures, unexplained, do injustice to the cities. All rapidly growing places contain an unnatural proportion of young people, and consequently of infants—the class among whom the mortality is every where very great. Of course, where this class is most numerous, a large ratio of deaths will be noted when those under five are compared with those older. A better method of ascertaining the true death-rate in infancy is found by comparing the deaths with the survivals, or (say) the deaths with the births. In this State, in the seven years closing with 1873, the births were 91,121, and the deaths under one year, 13,457, equal to 14.8 per cent., while the deaths under five years were 20,760, equal to 22.8,—the mortality in the first period exceeding that of Massachusetts nearly one per cent., and in the second period falling short of the Massachusetts rate nearly three per cent. In New Haven the facts are different. The births in that city in the eight years from 1867 to 1874, inclusive, were 12,676; the deaths under one year numbering 2,648, or 20.9, and under five years, 3,891, or 30.7 per cent. The corresponding figures for Boston in 1872 were 27.6 per cent. and 40.4. In all cases, the still-born are included with the births and deaths, as they should be, certainly for our present purpose.

But, however the facts may be viewed, and whatever allowances may properly be made, the mortality among young children in the large cities is appalling. There is no good reason for this except ignorance and neglect, present and past. The lower animals that are well provided for rarely die at the threshold of life, and there can scarcely be a doubt that human beings would fare no worse were they as guiltless of wrong, and as faithful to nature and the intelligence given them. Premature death is in all cases the evidence and measure of present and prospective deterioration. Among men it indicates that hostile elements too potent for assimila-

tion or elimination have entered the system ; that the species is threatened with grave disaster, and that decisive measures are required to stay the evil. Under these circumstances, nature (so-called), beneficent in its ends but murderous in its methods, steps in and does the work which man's offenses have made imperative.

Were men wiser and better ; had they always been more enlightened, virtuous, self-respecting and self-denying, seeking earnestly their own and their offspring's best good, there would be little need of the cruel law by which so many perish miserably in infancy. Children who could not live, and whose imperfections should not be transmitted, would not be born. Thus the great natural remedy, which fills the world with tribulation, would become superfluous. It is a stain on our civilization that no more has been done to arrest the progress of social misery and disease by preventive measures, and that now, near the close of the nineteenth century, we must trust our salvation to the primitive surgery of outraged nature. As government is instituted largely for defensive purposes, it should at least make earnest endeavors to protect the people from their deadliest, most insidious (but not uninvited) foes. In no other way can it do as much good with equal effort. From no other source can come the legal force which an efficient sanitary system demands.

The cities of Connecticut are not large, but they are populous enough to generate influences which are peculiar to the city. In many cases the streets are narrow, dirty and unwholesomely crowded ; the tenements are contracted and too mean for human use ; filth, inside and out, is allowed to accumulate ; the privies and cesspools are often nuisances ; the water is bad, or the sewerage is neglected. Too frequently cheap dwellings are allowed in low wet places where fogs accumulate. In the farming towns and villages where the population is sparse, injurious influences of a local or domestic character are not wanting.\* Nor should it be forgotten that these

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\* In a small village in St. Kilda, off the western shore of Scotland, where, not long ago, the inhabitants lived in the midst of filth, "eight out of every ten of the children died between the eighth and twelfth days of their existence."

influences are peculiar in each class of the people. In his habits and outward condition, as well as his occupation, the mechanic or merchant differs from the professional man ; the out-of-door laborer, from the factory hand ; the sedentary from the active, and the lazy from the industrious. There are differences, too, depending on race and nationality, age, sex, education, customs, and fashions. By the skillful grouping of individuals, placing those in the same class whose lives and work are similar, special influences may be viewed divested of their complications, and working by themselves. Having this advantage, the inquirer can, with comparative ease and certainty, connect each with its proper effect, and then decide what preventive measures can be employed. Till the preparatory steps have been taken and the requisite knowledge obtained, effort must be without aim or method, and usually unavailing.

Our great want in this matter is a larger collection of well-observed, authentic facts. We need combined action, a better method, and a more comprehensive plan. In no instance can efficient means for the prevention of disease be safely adopted till scientific investigation, perhaps on a considerable scale, has done its utmost to determine facts, eliminate errors, and ascertain the principles which should govern sanitary proceedings. In this State there is not now in existence any adequate means by the aid of which the desired end can be attained. The law, it is true, provides for local boards of health ; but these seem intended for special emergencies, as when small-pox or cholera is on the border. They have their long arctic nights of hibernation, and are not the efficient, steadily working bodies which our needs demand. We have, too, a registry law requiring a duly elected registrar (so-called) to keep a record of births, marriages, and deaths, in the last case giving birth-place, residence, age, sex, color, occupation, supposed cause, &c., and make return to the State Librarian. Out of his materials, the latter has annually, for more than twenty years, prepared a report, as perfect as his resources permitted, in which the more important facts are intelligibly

classified and tabulated. It is regularly published by the General Assembly, is in large demand, and a great improvement on any thing which had gone before. But by reason of imperfect data, it is not as complete as it should be. The original returns are sometimes defective or untruthful. It is suspected that the comparisons which the reader of the tables of mortality is tempted to make of certain cities with others—of Bridgeport and Hartford, for instance, with Norwich and New Haven, to the disparagement of the latter—are misleading, largely in consequence of unfaithful registration in the former. The town registrars are in some cases known to be incompetent; are selected for their opinions more than qualifications, and are changed too frequently. In comparatively few instances do they perform their whole duty. The records, which are important for legal as well as sanitary purposes, are too often exposed to loss by fire or accident. The registry law, we think, could be amended with advantage, in some instances by making it more stringent. The local boards of health too should be reorganized, new duties imposed, and more work assigned them. To a certain extent, they should be responsible, each within its sphere, for the execution of the law. They should also collect interesting facts relating to topography and the physical features of their respective towns. The occupations, habits, and ways of living of the people should be noted. The diseases which prevail, the order of succession, and their leading characteristics should be carefully observed, the inquirer taking particular notice of any thing which is peculiar to places or people. If a connection is suspected between any malady and certain conditions, the facts should be investigated.

We think, too, there should be, as in other States, a State Board of Health having defined relations to the commonwealth. Once organized, it could look after the local boards, correspond with them, receive their regular reports, set an example of promptness and efficiency, and see that the laws are complied with. It might be allowed to prescribe forms and point out the objects and methods of inquiry; should make an annual report of its doings, with such rec-



ommendations as seemed called for, to the Legislature, and need not be expensive. Suitably constructed, having the requisite machinery and a will for work, it would help our little State, in the matter of sanitary improvement, to keep abreast of Massachusetts and the other States. Within a few years there has been a great awakening to duty on this subject in Europe and America. In many directions unwonted activity prevails, and important results have already been obtained. Great Britain is noted for advanced opinions and praiseworthy achievements. Dr. Buchanan, quoted by Corfield, says that in twenty-five English towns the introduction of water-closets and the improvement of sewers and drains had benefited the general health and lowered the death-rate—in Cardiff and Newport, 32 per cent. each, and in Macclesfield and Croyden 20 per cent. each. In nine towns the mortality from typhoid fever was diminished more than half, and in Salisbury three-fourths. Cholera had become “practically harmless,” while the deaths from phthisis were greatly reduced, the last a result not anticipated. In 1872 Dr. Rauch, of Chicago, found that the health of each ward in that notable city was in direct proportion to the extent of sewerage, and that the death-rate might be determined, with approximate certainty, by the number of feet of sewer provided for each inhabitant. This connection was most conspicuous in the sickly months of July, August, and September, when accumulated filth is most obnoxious. Facts of the same kind might be cited without limit, but usually the full effects of hygienic improvements are not to be expected immediately, nor in one generation, or two. Constitutions, imperfect at birth, and further impaired by long continued exposure, cannot be made whole in a month or year. The damage may appear promptly, but recovery is commonly slow and tedious, the accumulated and inherited result of health-giving influences and uninterrupted well-doing.

It may be said that the medical profession has organized societies, local and general, which might look after the public as well as private health; but these are essentially voluntary, are without power or funds, and were instituted to facilitate

the exchange of experiences, and to give mutual help in curing rather than preventing disease. Physicians, in their associated and individual capacity, have done much to secure the general health, much in a preventive way. But as a rule they are poor, and largely engrossed in private practice. To obtain a living they must lead laborious lives as they ought, having but little to give to the public for the public's good. They have perhaps more than the average share of benevolent inclination; but taxed as they are with pressing private duties, and stinted in many ways, they cannot work habitually for the general welfare uncompensated. Nor have they, to warrant the sacrifice, a sufficient personal stake in the good to be attained. Besides, as private practitioners, their field of observation is too narrow, their inferences drawn from too few data, to answer the ends sought in this paper. Facts gathered from a wide territory under differing circumstances, and grouped in every possible way, are necessary for instructive comparisons and trustworthy conclusions. Many problems which cannot be solved by individual effort admit of complete or partial solution when referred to a competent central body assisted by willing correspondents favorably situated, all making them a special study. The results of the United States Signal Service system present a case for our encouragement.

In a matter which concerns the health, growth and destiny of every human being, and which is beyond the reach of voluntary effort, individual or associated, government has an abiding interest, and an obligation which it cannot set aside. If its proper business be to protect life, and secure its choicest blessings—to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number—it cannot more effectually attain its ends than by establishing and fostering an efficient sanitary system, making itself in a measure responsible for results. Nor is it sufficient to affirm that the State is already overburdened with duties; that it often does its work imperfectly and expensively, and that the country is already oppressed with the weight of taxation. In reply, it may be said that the adoption and faithful execution of the sanitary measures herein recommended would in effect relieve society of much of the

load which is every year becoming more grievous; and it is partly on the ground of a far-seeing economy that public aid in the direction named is solicited. That this assistance, which must prove profitable, is obligatory scarcely needs proof, but some further considerations may be offered.

It will not be denied that soundness of body and mind and a decent, guiltless life are essential to a people's material and spiritual welfare; but neither is possible without a healthful environment. They are consequences, and he who habitually disregards the connection must suffer. The injury received extends to every department of his nature, corporal, intellectual, and moral. Those who frequent crowded churches, court rooms, and school-houses sustain damage. He who has visited Music Hall, in New Haven, near the close of a popular entertainment, meeting the rushing current of heated, fetid air at the door, may get a foretaste of the chronic sufferings of thousands who spend their lives, sleeping and waking, in the over-peopled, polluted dwellings of the degraded poor, who breathe perennially an atmosphere freighted with carbonic acid gas and various loathsome emanations. Penetrated as they are with every villainous element, what *must* be the outcome? The detriment from the influences named is most conspicuous when their action is uninterrupted, and the powers of resistance are feeble, as in the case of infants kept wholly within doors. The injured, greatly enfeebled by exposure, become the easy victims of the first malady which appears. Fevers and other diseases which under different circumstances will not spread, become highly contagious or infectious, or "communicable," if that word be preferred. Adults and half-grown children, who spend much time out of doors, or in well ventilated shops and factories, have daily opportunity to recuperate; the new energy thus acquired protecting them from the ever-present enemy at home. Safety, however, must not in any case be inferred from the fact that the visible mischief is not immediate. It is well known that morbid effects of whatever kind often accumulate, and then, perhaps suddenly and after a long interval, appear with unexpected and destructive violence. If suppressed or over-



ruled in the individual, they may be expected in the children or some future generation. In the latter case, Omniscience alone can tell when the evil will be finally eliminated ; when tainted human blood flowing in countless living channels will again become pure. It should be remarked, however, that individuals who receive the poison in greatest concentration are less likely to inflict injury on the species than those who get it in a diluted form ; because, in the first instance, the infected are cut off in childhood ; in the second, survival and transmission are probable—Surely, these things are important enough to arrest the attention, and suggest the inquiry whether somebody has not a serious duty to discharge.

Uncleanliness and putrefaction at home, and noxious exhalations near by, are the great predisposing causes of disease everywhere, and add largely to their mortality. The slums of populous places, and the wretched hovels of the destitute and impure, are the favorite resorts of the contagious, infectious, and pestilential fevers. To these places they are drawn as by chemical affinity. He who is familiar with their habits and preferences, and the circumstances of the people, can map out the course they will take on their next appearance. Indeed, he can name the streets, the blocks, and even the families, where the harvest of death will be gathered. The predestined victims, their vital energies greatly weakened by protracted exposure, personal or parental, are in the worst condition for medical treatment. Whatever the disease may be, typhus, dysentery, epidemic cholera, scarlet fever, it usually assumes malignant characters, breaks over its original limits, and ere long spreads into more salubrious regions. Then society at large drinks to the dregs the cup of bitterness, paying the penalty of neglect. No people are safe, however faultless their own habitations and vicinage, who tolerate within striking distance these fountains of sickness. The instinct of self-preservation, if nothing better, should prompt to active, untiring defensive measures, and every human instrumentality having any power to save should be invoked for protection.

By needful attention to these festering abodes of disease and misery the present frightful mortality among young children

would be greatly reduced, and much hard feeling concerning "providential dispensations" saved. Cholera infantum and diarrhœa, dysentery, scarlet fever, serofula, &c., among this class, would be comparatively rare, and the business of the doctors, for the time, largely curtailed. The new-born would, in most cases, arrive at maturity, and oftener than now be able to make some return for the expense of rearing. Can there be a more imperative duty resting on our chosen guardians than that of preserving the health and vigor of those who are to fill the vacancies occasioned by death—of those who will be, for good or evil, the sole representatives of our race? On their freedom from infirmity rest all our hopes of a renovated humanity and a higher life.

A pernicious environment in effect roots up the nobler and best instincts of our nature. It brutalizes and dwarfs the intellect, corrupts the morals, breeds intemperance\* and sensuality, and is ever recruiting the ranks of the vile and "the dangerous." It is the great barrier in the way of radical reform, a discouragement to the philanthropist, perhaps a plea for doing nothing. The attempt to humanize and elevate the degraded, to inspire them with grace, virtuous desires, and manly sentiment, without improving their physical condition, is vain, not to say preposterous. Till certain fundamental laws are set aside they must always fail. If one would cleanse the stream he should go to the fountain. If three-fourths of the strength and money now expended in benevolent enterprises were devoted to the sanitary and social improvement of the destitute and depraved, leaving the other fourth to be employed as now, better and more permanent results would be obtained. If our town authorities would expend more liberally for the same purpose, aiming to prevent pauperism by removing its causes, they would act the part of wisdom and consult economy. If the excellent men and women whose hearts bleed for the

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\* "The same work-people indulge more in drink when living in the close courts and lanes of the town than when living in the country." "They strenuously allege the impossibility of avoiding the practice in such places," "the depressing effects of the external and internal miasma on the nervous system tending to incite the habitual use of ardent spirits."—*General Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Laboring Population of Great Britain, 1842*, p. 130.

wretched and needy would organize and equip scavenger parties, and lead them to the places which breed the mischief, they would show a juster appreciation of the work to be done, and the method of doing it. Before their labors were ended the children would be dug out, washed and combed, the clothing and bedding purified, the floors, walls, and casements scraped and scrubbed (using no more water than will dry quickly\*), filth and every rotting substance removed from the cellar and premises, privies cleansed, dogs and pig-stys banished, and good drainage secured. Disinfectants may be used when removal is impracticable. Some radical process like cremation will be the proper remedy for habitations irredeemably tainted or fatally defective. After the bodily wants have been provided for ; after fresh air, sunlight, pure water, wholesome food, and the like, have become attainable, cleanliness secured, and the duty of self-help taught,\* we may give our attention to the spiritual nature. The preliminary work done, the incrustations which bind in fetters the nobler faculties may be broken through ; the dark chambers of the imbruted intellect and moral sense lighted up.

Our present methods, public and private, of giving relief to the poor are painfully defective and inadequate. Our almoners waste much precious energy on consequences, while causes and conditions are not disturbed. Too often they degrade and make more helpless those they assist, destroy their ambition, encourage indolence and improvidence, fill our alms-houses with chronic paupers, and our streets with

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\*The mischief with which a damp, confined, or foggy atmosphere is often freighted does not proceed from the watery vapor which it contains, but from the other foreign, usually organic and sometimes decomposing, substances held in solution or suspension. Damp air at a low temperature carries off heat rapidly from the exposed body, but is not otherwise injurious, as those who sail ships in mid-ocean can testify. But water hastens the dissolution of animal and vegetable matters, while moisture in the air greatly facilitates the absorption of the gases and vapors which are extricated. It also favors the diffusion of contagious and infectious effluvia, and the emanations of every kind which proceed from diseased and defiled human bodies. Usually, dry air is more wholesome, for the sole reason that it is cleaner. It checks, instead of expediting, the putrefactive and other chemical processes. Without moisture, organic substances undergo no change, and filth becomes odorless and harmless.

mendicants and vagrants. This, certainly, is a beggarly result, and might have been foreseen. Poor human nature cannot afford to lose a single motive to exertion and manly achievement. Scarcely does there exist, at the present day, a greater or more dangerous evil than that of misdirected or indiscriminate alms-giving. As a people, we "point with pride," as the phrase is, to our rapidly increasing population and prodigious voting capacity, but give little heed to the debasing agencies among us, and those better elements which the census does not embrace, or the speculator in building lots appreciate. Numbers, alone, do not give strength, much more, purity, honor, truth, or any human adornment. That civilization which gives no heed to formative influences and the physical well-being of a people; which takes no measures to secure a sound constitution, and a virtuous, cleanly life, neglects a fundamental duty, and to that extent is a pretentious sham.

There need be no apprehension about the population of any well-favored country, or at least its birth-rate. No race or people that deserved to live, has, from intrinsic difficulty, ever yet run out. Natural instinct and the love of offspring are not insufficient for their intended object. Number always keeps pace with civilization and the available means of subsistence. Hitherto, want, suffering, vice, and premature death alone have been able to keep population within its actual limits. A moderate increase is a *sign* of comfort and prosperity, but not the cause. Intellectual progress, honorable lives, and happy homes have no needful connection with it. That social condition of a people which requires, as in our large cities, an excessive birth-rate to keep its number good is indeed deplorable—deplorable because poverty, degeneration, criminality, and the sacrifice of infants are its invariable antecedents and requirements. The most desirable state of society is that in which the smallest relative number of births will suffice for a given increase. Viewed from the economic standpoint, a nation is, for the time, weakened by its children. They are not producers, but a dead weight on the backs of the industrious, and a source of impoverishment. Speaking without

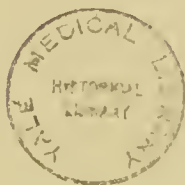
sentiment and in the language of commerce, they have only a prospective, uncertain value. Each represents a large expenditure and much capital which are lost for ever in case of early death. A large class in the cities, those at the bottom of the social ladder, who are governed by their instincts alone, waste their substance—deprive themselves of bread and the decencies of life—in an attempt to raise children. It is a vain endeavor. They only crowd with victims the avenues of death. Prolificness, always greatest when extinction of race is threatened, will not secure the end, and humanity protests.

But protestation will not cure the evils. Something more substantial, more practical is demanded. History and experience prove that individuals and families, even when knowledge is not lacking, give little heed to sanitary conditions, and get more careless when merited punishment is delayed. This is especially so when habits of indolence must be sacrificed, and unceasing vigilance is demanded. It is a common effect of the noxious influences so often referred to, when applied continuously, to blunt the sensibility, engender recklessness of life and unconsciousness of danger. The injured are spell-bound, as it were, and have no abiding wish for reform. They even hug their misery, and are practically helpless. They will never be cared for till, for the time, taken out of their own hands, and placed in charge of those not similarly enthralled. This voluntary bondage proves that their nervous systems are profoundly impressed, and their whole nature perverted. It is painful to see how the domestic character is often changed for the worse by outward circumstances. A family accustomed to the comforts and decencies of life, and noted for neatness and order, if compelled by adverse fortune to accept meaner, more contracted quarters, to breathe damp, foul air, drink bad water, and live in penury, are very likely to lose their commendable traits, and acquire others in keeping with their condition. Perhaps the father becomes intemperate, the mother gets slatternly and improvident, and the children dirty and mischievous. At this point, where ambition and self-respect take leave, if immorality and vice do not enter, there is cause for thankfulness.



Though the data are imperfect, estimates have been made of the cost to a community of preventable sickness—the cost (in dollars) to include the expense of medical attendance, medicine, nursing, loss of time or labor, &c.—and the figures, for a State like ours, would certainly land us, once a year, among the millions. But we have no space for this branch of our subject.

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